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Cuban named in probe tipped Reagan team on weapons

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Raymond Molina, a wealthy Miami real estate developer and Bay of Pigs veteran, traveled to Key West as a volunteer in 1980 to translate for and "orient" arriving Mariel refugees.

Instead, Molina says, he got an unexpected orientation from the refugees, who gave him what he calls "extremely explosive" information about Cuba's alleged possession of nuclear weapons and chemical warfare equipment.

Molina says he gave the information to the CIA, and then turned over the same material to Reagan campaign officials days later because he felt the Carter administration "was not going to do anything."

The four-year-old incident is now stirring up controversy in Washington, where it recently came to the attention of a House subcommittee investigating the passing of inside information from the Carter White House to the

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1980 Reagan campaign.

A 2,400-page report recently issued by the subcommittee includes a section on the incident, and contains a memo written by Reagan campaign aide Belden Belle partially describing the information received from Molina and the Mariel refugees.

According to the panel's docu-

ments, three Reagan campaign aides were aware of the information: Richard Allen, Roger Fontaine and Belle.

Allen later became Reagan's national security adviser and Fontaine served as a Latin America analyst on the National Security Council. Neither is now with the administration.

The subcommittee concluded that although it appeared that Reagan campaign aides "did not trust" Molina, they had not "discouraged Molina from providing sensitive intelligence information to the campaign, even though he may have had access to government intelligence sources."

The panel has recommended that other congressional committees involved in intelligence matters review the affair.

To Molina, there's no conflict. "I was the owner of the information," he said. "I could do with the info whatever I wanted."

Molina, a tall, balding, blond-haired man who spent two years in a Cuban prison for his role in the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion, said he came across the information when he and friends from Miami interviewed three Mariel refugees getting off the boats in Key West.

One, Alarcon Roman Ramacrishna, claimed he had been an official translator for Fidel Castro during trips of the Cuban leader to the Soviet Union.

During conversations that Ramacrishna translated for Castro, Molina said, the Cuban leader discussed the presence of nuclear missiles and chemical weapons in Cuba.

Since 1962, when the Soviet Union removed nuclear missiles from Cuba after a confrontation with the Kennedy administration, U.S. officials have traditionally held that there is no evidence that Cuba still harbors nuclear weapons.

A second refugee, Armando Romero Rivas, claimed to have been a lieutenant in a chemical warfare battalion stationed in Havana.

"He gave precise descriptions of Cuba's chemical warfare capabilities, training that the Russians gave

them and the objectives they had in different U.S. scenarios," Molina said.

A third refugee, Walfrido Ulises Rosel, was either a captain or a lieutenant in the Cuban army stationed in caves near Havana where chemical inventories were stored, Molina said. Rosel had also been stationed with one of the companies guarding nuclear missiles.

Rosel, Molina said, identified two locations where nuclear weapons were stored, Arroyo Arena and Managua, both near Havana, and described arrangements made for security, including ground-to-air protection.

Molina said he and his friends, among them other Bay of Pigs veterans, interviewed the three refugees, who arrived within two days of each other, for a total of about 10 to 12 hours each.

Molina then wrote a five-page report that he turned over to CIA contacts in Key West and to Reagan aides Fontaine and Belle several days later.

Molina says he knew Belle and Fontaine from the three years he spent in Washington in the 1970s

acting as a registered representative of the government of then-Nicaraguan strongman Anastasio Somoza.

Although Molina says he was impressed by the refugees' sincerity and precise descriptions, he made no decision as to their veracity and had even considered that they could be Castro agents planting disinformation.

"I didn't come to believe anything," he said. "I just wrote it down. It's up to the intelligence agencies to determine if it's true or not."

According to Molina, the CIA took the trio to debrief them and later returned them to the South Florida area. He has never heard from them again.

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